



BENJY IN BEASTLAND.

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(Concluded.)



H! it was a beautiful place. There were many more beasts than there are in the Zoological Gardens; and they were all free. They did not devour each other, for a peculiar kind of short grass grew all over Beastland, which was eaten by all alike.

If by chance there was any quarrelling, or symptoms of misbehaviour, the man in the moon would cry "Manners!" and all was quiet at once.

Talking of manners, the civility of the beasts in Beastland was most conspicuous. They came in crowds and welcomed Benjy, each after his own fashion. The cats rubbed their heads against his legs, and held their tails erect, as if they were presenting arms. The dogs wagged theirs, and barked and capered round him; except one French poodle, who "sat up" during the whole visit, as an act of politeness. The little birds sang and chirruped. The pigeons sat on his shoulders and cooed; two little swallows clung to the eaves of his hat, and twitched their tails, and said "Kiwit! kiwit!" A peacock with a spread tail went before him; and a flock of rose-coloured cockatoos brought up the rear. Presently a wise and solemn old elephant came and knelt before Benjy; and Benjy got on to his back and rode in triumph, the other beasts following.

"Let us show him the lions!" cried all the beasts; and on they went.

But when Benjy found that they meant real lions—like the lions in a menagerie, but not in cages—he was frightened, and would not go on. And he explained that by the "lions" of a place *he* meant the "sights" that are exhibited to strangers, whether natural curiosities, or local manufactures. When the beasts understood this, they were most anxious to show him "lions" of his own kind.

So the wise-eyed beavers, whose black faces were as glossy as that of Nox, took him to their lodges, and showed him how they fell or collect wood "up stream" with their sharp teeth, and so float it down to the spot where they have decided to build, as the "logs" from

American forests float down the rivers in spring. And as they displayed the wondrous forethought and ingenuity of their common dwellings, a little caddis worm, in the water hard by, begged Benjy to observe that, on a smaller scale, his own house bore witness to similar patience and skill, with its rubble walls of motley variety.

In another stream a doughty little stickleback sailing round and round the barrel-shaped nest, over which he was keeping watch, displayed its construction with pardonable pride.

Then Benjy saw, with an interest it was impossible not to feel, the wonderful galleries in the earth cities of the ants; the nests of the large hornet, the wasp, and the earwig, where hive as well as comb is the work of the industrious proprietors; and whilst he was looking at these, a message came from three patches of lepraliæ on the back of an old oyster-shell by the sea, to beg that Benjy would come and see their dwellings, where the cells were not of one uniform pattern, but in all varieties of exquisite shapes, each tribe or family having its own proper style of architecture. And it must not be supposed that, because lepralia cells can only be seen under a microscope with us, that it was so in Beastland; for there all the labours and exquisite performances of every animal were equally manifest to sight.

But invitations came in fast. The "social grosbeaks" requested him to visit their city of nests in a distant wood; the "prairie dogs" wished to welcome him to their village of mounds, where each dog, sitting on his own little hut, eagerly awaited the honour of his visit. The rooks bade him to a solemn conference; and a sentinel was posted on every alternate tree, up to the place of meeting, to give notice of his approach. A spider (looking very like some little old, hard-headed, wizen-faced, mechanical genius!) was really anxious to teach Benjy to make webs.

"Look here," said he; "we will suppose that you are ready and about to begin. Well. You look—anywhere, in fact—down into space, and decide to what point you wish to affix your first line. Then—you have a ball of thread in your inside, of course?"

I can't say that I have," said Benjy; "but I have a good deal of string in my pocket."

"That's all right," said the spider; "I call it thread, you call it string. Pocket or stomach, it's all the same, I suppose. Well——"

But just as the spider was at the crisis of his lesson, and all was

going on most pleasantly—whizz!—the tell-tale-tit made its appearance, and soon whispered, first to one animal and then to another, who and what Benjy was. The effect was magical. "Scandalous!" cried all the beasts; "the mcnster!" An old tabby cat puffed out her tail, and ran up a tree. "Boy!" she exclaimed, in a tone of the deepest disgust; for in Beastland they say "boy" as a term of reproach where we should say "beast."

The confusion was great; and the tell-tale-tit revelled in it, hopping and flitting about, and adding a word here or there if the excitement seemed to flag.

"To think what he might do to us, if we were down yonder!" cried an old pug. (She was a great-grandmother, and so fat that she could hardly waddle.)

"He is in *your* power up here, you know," said the tell-tale-tit, suggestively.

"So he is!" cried the beasts; and with one voice they shouted—"Punishment! Punishment! Bring him to the lion!" And to the lion he was brought, the beasts still crying, "Punishment! Punishment!"

"I'll punish him!" cried a donkey, who trotted up on hearing of the matter. "Let me get a lump of cold iron between his teeth, and tug and jerk it against the corners of his mouth. Let me pull in and flog at the same moment. Let me knock him over the head, and kick him in the ribs, and thwack his back, and prod his side; and I'll soon make him run, and take his nasty temper out of him, and teach him to carry any weight, and go gaily in harness."

"Gently, gently, my friend," said the lion. "You speak under a very natural feeling of irritation; but if I am to be judge of this case, the prisoner must have fair play."

Accordingly the beasts placed themselves in a sort of order, Benjy being put in the middle; and a bull-frog that lived in a ditch hard by was appointed to watch the case on his behalf. The bull-frog had big, watchful eyes, and was cool and cautious. As the case proceeded he occasionally said, "Omph!" which sounded thoughtful and committed him to nothing.

"What is the prisoner accused of?" asked the lion.

At this question everybody looked round for the tell-tale-tit; but, like most mischief-makers, the good gossip liked nothing less than

being brought to book, and had taken advantage of the confusion to fly away. So the other animals had to recall what they had heard as best they might.

"He ill-uses and drowns dogs, hunts and kills cats——"

"Rough kills the cats," Benjy interrupted, for he was becoming alarmed.

"Omph!" said the bull-frog.

"Send for Mr. Rough," said the lion; and a messenger was despatched. (It is not always needful to disturb yourself, dear reader, when your pet dog is absent without leave: he may have gone on business to Beastland.)

"Cock-a-doodle-do! Flap, flap! send for more whilst you are about it," cried a handsome gamecock, strutting into the midst. "Cock-a-doodle-do! when I crow, let no other cock open his beak. There's a nice, cockfighting, good-for-nothing young scapegrace! I know a pullet of the same breed down yonder: his name is Tom. Let him be fetched up, and we will fasten spurs on to their heels, and set them to kick each other, and tear each other's eyes out. It will be rare sport, and sport is a noble taste, and should be encouraged. Flap, flap! cock-a-doodle-do!"

The cock was just stretched on his tiptoes, in the act of crowing, when a pattering of feet and the jingling of a chain collar were heard, and Mister Rough trotted brusquely into the circle, with his clipped ears and his stumpy tail erect.

"Mister Rough," said the lion; "the prisoner says it is you and not he who torment the cats."

"Bowf, bowf, bowf!" replied the terrier, jumping wildly about in his stocking feet. "Whose fault is it? Wowf, wowf, wowf! who taught me to do it? Bowf, wowf! that bad boy there. Rowf, rowf! let me get hold of him by the small of the back, and I'll shake him as I would shake a rat. Rowf, wowf, bowf!"

"*Manners!*" cried the man in the moon, and there was silence at once.

"Then he has not gone to Norwich, after all!" said Benjy to himself.

After a short pause the examination was resumed. Mister Rough deposed that he hunted cats by the teaching and imperative orders of Benjy and other human beings. That he could not now see a cat without a feeling which he could only describe as madness seizing him, which obliged him to chase and despatch puss without any delay.

He never felt this sensation towards the cat of his own house, in her own kitchen. They were quite friendly, and ate from the same dish. In cross-examination he admitted that he had a natural taste for tearing things, and preferred fur to any other material. But he affirmed that an occasional slipper or other article would have served the purpose, but for his unfortunate education, especially if the slipper or other article were hairy or trimmed with fur.

"But all that is as nothing," cried the old tabby, indignantly; "he has been guilty of the most horrible cruelties, and they ought to be paid back to him in kind. Sss, spt! he's a boy, I say, a regular boy!"

"Omph!" said the bull-frog, and went below to consider the case.

"Gentlebeasts," said the lion, "I consider it unnecessary to hear more evidence against the prisoner, especially as no attempt is made to deny his cruelties, though in the matter of cat-hunting he implicates Mister Rough. There are not two opinions as to his guilt; the only open question is that of punishment. As you have placed the matter in my hands, I will beg you to wait until I have taken three turns, and given the subject my serious consideration."

But instead of three turns, the lion took seven, pacing majestically round and round, and now and then lashing his tail. At last he resumed his seat; the bull-frog put his green head up again, and the lion spoke.

"Gentlebeasts, birds, and fishes, I have given this subject my most serious consideration, and I trust that my decision will not give offence. Our friend, Madame Tabby, declares that the prisoner should be punished with a like cruelty to that he has inflicted. Friend Donkey is ready to ride or drive him with all the kicking, beating, and pulling which soured his own temper, and stunted his faculties in their early development. I must frankly say that I am not in favour of this. My friends, let us not degrade ourselves to the level of men. We know what they are. Too often stupid in their kindness, vindictive in their anger, and not seldom wantonly cruel. Is this our character as a class? Do we even commonly retaliate? Ask friend Donkey himself. Does the treatment (even more irrational than unkind) which blunts the intelligence, and twists the temper of so many of his race, prevent their rendering on the whole the largest labour for the roughest usage of any servant of man? Need I speak of dogs? Do they bear malice towards a harsh master? Are they

unfaithful because he is unkind? Would Mister Rough himself permit any one to touch an article of his master's property, or grudge his own life in his defence? No, my friends; we are beasts, remember, not boys. We have our own ideas of chase and sport like men, but cruelty is not one of our vices. I believe, gentlebeasts, that it is a principle with the human race to return good for evil; but according to my experience the practice is more common amongst ourselves. Gentlebeasts, we *cannot* treat this boy as he has treated us: but he is unworthy of our society, and I condemn him to be expelled. Some of our dog-friends have taken refuge here with tin-kettles at their tails. Let one of these be fastened to Benjy, and let him be chased from Beastland."

This was no sooner said than done. And with an old tin pan cutting his heels at every step, Benjy was hunted from the moon. The lion gave one terrific roar as the signal for starting, and all the beasts, with Mister Rough at their head, gave chase.

Dear readers, did you ever wonder—as I used to wonder—if one could get to the end of the world *and jump off*? One is bound to confess that, as regards our old earth, it is not feasible; but permit me (in a story) to state that Benjy ran and ran till he got to the end of the moon and jumped off, Mister Rough jumping after him. Down, down they went through space; past the Great Bear (where were all the ghosts of the big wild beasts); past the Little Bear (where were the ghosts of all the small wild beasts); close by the Dog Star, where good dogs go to when they die, and where the "dog in the manger" sat outside, and must never go in till all the dogs are assembled. This they passed so close that they could see the dog of Montargis and the hound Gelert affably licking each other's noses, and telling stories of old times to the latest comer. This was a white poodle, whose days on earth had been prolonged by tender care till he outlived almost every faculty and sense but the power to eat, and a strange intuitive knowledge of his master's presence, surviving every other instinct. There he sat now, no longer the blind, deaf, feeble, shrunken heap of bones and matted wool, that died of sheer old age, and was buried on the garden side of the churchyard wall, as near as permissible to the family vault; but the snowy, fluffy, elegant poodle of his youth, with graceful ears raised in respectful attention to the hero of Montargis.

Down, down they went, on, on! How far and long it seemed!

And now it was no longer night but morning, and the sun shone, and still they went on, on, down, down: Benjy crying "Oh! oh!" and Rough and his chain collar going "Bowf, wowf, jingle, jingle," till they came close above the river, and before Benjy could give an extra shriek the two were floundering in the water. Rough soon swam ashore, but Benjy could not swim, and the water sucked him down as it had sucked down many a dog in that very spot. Then Benjy choked, and gasped, and struggled, as his victims had so often choked, and gasped, and struggled under his eyes. And he fought with the intolerable suffocation till it seemed as if his head must burst, yet he could not cry out, for the cold water gagged him. Then he grasped at something that floated by, but it gave him no help, for it was a dead dog—the one he had thrown into the river the evening before. And horror chilled him more than the cold water had done, as he thought that now he himself must be drowned and rot among these ghastly relics of his cruelty. And a rook on a tree hard by cried, "Serve him right! serve him right!" whilst the frogs by the river sat staring at the crushed bodies of their relatives, and croaked, "Stone him! stone him!" A pike that hovered near could owe him no grudge, for the creatures he had drowned had afforded it many a meal. But, like most accomplices, the pike was selfish, and only waited for the time when it could eat Benjy too. Meanwhile, some one on the bank was giving short sharp barks, like minute guns of distress, that had quite a different meaning.

And then Benjy sank; and as he went down the remembrance of all his cruelties rushed over his mind, as the water rushed over his body. All, from the first bumble bee he had tortured, to the needle in Nox's lip, came together in one hideous crowd to his remembrance, till even the callous soul of Benjy sickened, and he loathed himself.

And now he rose again for a moment to the surface, and caught a breath of air, and saw the blue sky, and heard a corn-crake in the field where his sisters had wanted him to go cowslip-gathering; and he fancied he saw the beautiful black head of Nox also in the water, and found himself saying in his heart: "No, no! thank God, I didn't kill him."

And then he sank again. And he thought of his home, and his father and mother, and the little sisters whom he had teased; and how he had got them into scrapes, and killed their pets, and laughed at their tears. And he remembered how they had come to meet him

last midsummer holidays, with flowers in their hats, and flowers round the donkey's ears; and how he had prodded poor Neddy with a stick having a sliding spike which he had brought with him. And what fun he had found in the starts of the donkey, and the terror and astonishment of the children. Oh! how often had he not skulked from the society of these good and dear ones, to be proud of being noticed and instructed in evil by some untaught village blackguard! And then he thought of the cosy bed and his mother's nightly blessing, never more to be his, who must now lie amongst dead dogs as if he himself were such another!

And then he rose again, and there was the noble head of old Nox not three feet from him. He could see the clear brown eyes fixed eagerly upon him, and he thought: "He is coming to revenge himself on me." But he did not mind, for he was almost past feeling any new pain. Only he gave one longing, wistful look towards the home that had been his. And as he looked a lark rose and went up into the summer sky. And as the lark went up, up, Benjy went down, down.

Now as he sank there came into his mind a memory of something he had once read, comparing the return of a Christian soul to God to the soaring of a lark into the heavens. And no animal that he had seized in his pitiless grasp ever felt such despair and helplessness as Benjy felt when the strong, pitiless thought seized his soul, that, though his body might decay among dead dogs, he could not die as the dogs had died—irresponsible for the use of life. And many a sin, besides sins of cruelty, came back to poor Benjy's mind—known sins, for which he had been punished, but not penitent; sins that were known to no human being but himself, and sins that he had forgotten until now. And he remembered one day at school, when the head master had given some serious warnings and advice to himself and a few other boys in private. And how he had sat mum and meek, with his smudgy and secretive face, till the old doctor had departed, and how he had then delivered a not very clever mimic address in the doctor's style, to the effectual dissipation of all serious thought. And now—opportunities, advice, and time of amendment were all but gone, and what had he to look forward to? From the depths of his breaking heart Benjy prayed he might somehow or other be spared to do better. And for the third and last time he rose to the surface.

The lark was almost out of sight; but close to Benjy's pallid face was a soft black nose, and large brown eyes met his with an expression

neither revengeful nor affectionate. It was business-like, earnest, and somewhat eager and proud. And then the soft, sensitive mouth he had wounded seized Benjy with a hold as firm and as gentle as if he had been a rare water-fowl, and Nox paddled himself round with his broad, brown paws, and made gallantly for shore. Podgy Benjy was much heavier than a dead cat, and the big brave beast had hard work of it; so that by the time he had dragged the body to land, Nox was too far spent to toss his head and carry his prize about as usual. He dropped Benjy, and lay down by him, with one paw on the body, as much as to say—"Let no unauthorised person meddle in this matter."

But when he was rested, he took up Benjy in his mouth, and—not deigning so much as a glance in the direction of some men who were shouting and running towards him—he trotted with his burden to the Morgue under the willow-tree, where he laid Benjy down side by side with two dead dogs, a kitten, and an old hat.

After which he shook himself, and went home to breakfast.

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WHAT BECAME OF BENJY.

Benjy was duly found under the willow-tree, and taken home. For a long time he was very ill, though at last he recovered; and I am bound to state that some of his relatives consider his visit to Beastland to be entirely mythical. They believe that he fell from the willow-tree into the water, and that his visit to the moon is a fanciful conceit woven during illness by his fevered brain.

However that may be, Benjy and beasts were thenceforward on very different terms. I will not deny that some other causes may have helped towards this. Perhaps when the boys of a family are naturally disagreeable, the fact is apt to be too readily acquiesced in. They have license that no one would dream of according to the girls, but it may sometimes be too readily decided that boys will be boys, in the most obnoxious sense of the term, and a "bad name" is unfavourable to them as well as to dogs.

Now during long weeks of convalescence, Benjy's only companions were his parents and the little sisters, whose sympathy with beastkind had always been in such manifest contrast to his own tastes. And as the little maids could only amuse him with their own amusements, and as, moreover, there is no occupation so soothing, healing, and renovating to mind and body, so full of interest without hurtful ex-

citement, as the study of Nature, it came about that Benjy's sick-room was so decorated with plants, aquariums, and so forth, that it became a sort of miniature Beastland. From watching his sisters, Benjy took to feeding the fresh-water beasts himself; and at last became so tenderly interested in their fate, that he privately "tipped" the housemaid with his last half-crown, to induce her to come up the stairs in the morning with great circumspection. For the cray-fish was given to escaping from his tank for an early stroll, and had once been all but trodden on at the bottom of the first flight of stairs.

But it was a very sad event which fully and finally softened Benjy's heart.

As Benjy was being carried into the house after his accident, Mister Rough caught sight of his master in this doleful position, and was anxious to follow and see what became of him. But as he was in the way, a servant was ordered to fasten him up in his own out-house; and to this man's care he was confided through Benjy's illness. The little girls often asked after him, and received satisfactory reports of his health, but as the terrier's temper was supposed to be less trustworthy than that of Nox, they were not allowed to play with him, or take him out with them. Hence it came about that he was a good deal neglected at this time, Benjy's parents being so absorbed by the anxiety of his illness, and the sisters not being allowed to make the dog their companion. Once or twice the servant took him out for a run; but Mister Rough would not take a proper "constitutional." The instant he was free, he fled to the house to see what had become of Benjy. As he did this every time, and it was inconvenient, the servant finally left him alone, and did not take him out at all. Food was put within his reach, but Mister Rough's appetite failed daily. A cat crept in under the roof and looked at her old enemy with impunity. A rat stole his crusts; and Mister Rough never moved his eyes nor his nose from the opening under the barn-door. Oh, for one sniff of Benjy passing by! Oh, to be swung round a dozen times by the teeth or tail! Oh, for a kicking, a thrashing—for *anything* from Benjy! So the gentle heart within that rough little body pined day by day in its loving anxiety for a harsh master.

But the first time that Benjy came downstairs, he begged that Mister Rough might be brought into the drawing-room; for, as I have said, if he had a regard for any animal it was for the wiry terrier. So the servant opened the barn-door; and Mister Rough thought of Benjy,

and darted into the house. And when he got into the front hall, he smelt Benjy, and ran into the drawing-room; and when he got into the drawing-room, he saw Benjy, who had heard the jingle of his collar, and stood up to receive him with outstretched arms. Then with one wild sound, that was neither a bark nor a whine, Mister Rough sprang to Benjy's arms, and fell at his feet.

Dead? Yes, dead; with one spasm of unspeakable joy!

Benjy's grief for his faithful friend was not favourable to his bodily health just then, but it was good for him in other ways. And as the bitter tears poured over his cheeks and dropped on to the scarred, grizzled, little face that could feel cruelty or kindness no more, the smudginess seemed to be washed away from him body and soul.

Yes, in spite of all past sins, Benjy lived to amend, and to become, eventually, a first-rate naturalist, and a good friend to beasts. For there is no doubt that some most objectionable boys do get scrubbed, and softened, and ennobled into superior men. And Benjy was one of these.

By the time he was thoroughly strong again, he and his little sisters had a common interest in the animals under their care—their own private Beastland. He tried to pet another terrier, but in vain. So the new "Rough" was given to the sisters, and Benjy adopted Nox. For he said, "I should like a dog who knew Mister Rough;" and, "If Nox likes me in spite of old times, I shall believe I am fit to keep a pet." And no one who knows dogs needs to be told that not the ghost of a bit of malice lessened the love which the benevolent retriever bore to his new master.

The savings of Benjy's pocket-money for some time were expended on a tombstone for the terrier's grave, with this inscription—

TO A FAITHFUL FRIEND,

ROUGH WITHOUT AND GENTLE WITHIN,

WHO DIED OF JOY,

APRIL 3, 18—,

ON HIS MASTER'S RECOVERY FROM SICKNESS.

* * * * *

And that true and tender beast, who bore so much hard usage for so long, but died of his one great happiness—

Dear reader, do you not think he is in the Dog Star?